

I've opposed this war from the very beginning.&nbsp; The American people were misled by the Bush Administration into supporting this war, and in November they sent a clear message that they do not support an open-ended commitment in Iraq.

American troops have now been in Iraq longer than our involvement in World War II. Over 3,000 American servicemen and women have been killed, and over 24,000 injured. As the War in Iraq enters its fifth year with no end in sight, it is clearly time for a new direction.

On March 15, 2007, House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey offered legislation that would establish a clearly defined timeframe for ending our role in Iraq. When President Bush recently laid out standards for progress he hoped to see in Iraq, there was no real accountability in those benchmarks. Mr. Obey's "U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act", however, mandates clear consequences if those benchmarks are not met:

- If the President fails to report to Congress progress on key security benchmarks by the Iraqi government by July 1, 2007, a redeployment of U.S. troops begins immediately and must be completed within 180 days.
- If the President fails to certify that Iraq has met certain legislative benchmarks by October 1, 2007, a redeployment of U.S. troops begins immediately and must be completed within 180 days.
- In any case, at the latest, a redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq must begin by March 1, 2008 and must be completed by August 31, 2008.

The Obey bill also includes much needed health assistance to those veterans who deserve the full gratitude of our nation. Recent reports have shown that the Bush Administration clearly isn't supporting veterans in Walter Reed Hospital, and I was pleased that the supplemental appropriations bill included the funding needed to provide our returning troops with the quality care that they deserve.

Forcing our troops to remain in Iraq without a clear exit strategy is unacceptable, and it is critical that this legislation move through Congress quickly. Until legislation can be passed by a Congressional majority, our troops will remain enmeshed in the civil war that is raging in Iraq. I

encourage everyone who supports an end to the war in Iraq to support this viable path to returning our troops home to their families and putting an end to the war by a date certain.